

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
AND  
STATEMENT OF FINDINGS**

**WEST PENN TRAIL EXTENSION AND AUGMENTATION  
CONEMAUGH TOWNSHIP, INDIANA COUNTY  
AND  
DERRY TOWNSHIP, WESTMORELAND COUNTY  
PENNSYLVANIA**

The Conemaugh Valley Conservancy (CVC) proposes to extend and augment the 3.3-mile long Conemaugh River Lake Section of their West Penn Trail which is located on a former railroad grade at Conemaugh River Lake. The extension will permit connection of the Conemaugh River Lake Section of the trail with the CVC's Saltsburg Section to the west. Augmentation of the West Penn Trail will consist partly of reopening a 700-foot long segment of an earlier abandoned railroad bed and short connecting trail to the West Penn Trail in order to provide a vantage point for viewing one of the stone arch railroad bridges over which the main trail crosses Conemaugh River Lake. This short trail will be called the Livermore Spur. Additional augmentation by the CVC and the Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District will consist of replacing the existing fence barriers at the ends of the former railroad tunnel through Bow Ridge with new barriers set 20 and 16 feet inside the eastern and western tunnel portals, respectively, spreading suitable surface material, and providing picnic tables to facilitate the portals' use for picnicking and as shelters in inclement weather.

The trail extension proposed by the CVC will consist of the construction of timber steps and the reopening of a switchback trail and ramp on the eastern slope of Bow Ridge. On top and on the western slope of Bow Ridge, existing trails and roads will be improved with the placement of mulch or crushed stone, as required, for West Penn Trail use. Beyond the western side of the ridge, the trail will cross an existing stone arch former railroad bridge. It will use existing roads and walkways on Federal and Indiana County property on the right bank of the Conemaugh River. In the recreation area near the right Conemaugh River Dam abutment, new segments of trail about 200 feet long and 425 feet long will be constructed by the CVC. The longer of these near the dam access road will connect the Conemaugh River Lake Section of the trail with its Saltsburg Section.

Reopening the Livermore Spur trail will entail only the cutting of brush, the placement of a crushed stone trail surface and the installation of a single-post interpretive sign. Investigation of the Spur's wetland aspects and coordination between the CVC and the Pennsylvania Game Commission on its use are ongoing and will be completed prior to further developmental work on the Spur.

The other augmentation action proposed by the CVC will include the replacement of the fence barriers at either end of the former railroad tunnel through Bow Ridge by the Pittsburgh District. The new barriers will be installed 20 feet inside the eastern portal entrance and 16 feet

inside the western portal entrance to allow their use as picnic shelters. Crushed stone surfacing and picnic tables will be provided by the CVC at the portals.

In connection with the lease amendment or new lease to be provided by the Pittsburgh District to the CVC for the trail extension and augmentation, a draft EA was prepared and coordinated with the appropriate agencies and the public. As part of the preparation of the EA, coordination was undertaken with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for compliance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Endangered Species Act. No Federally-listed species are known to occur within the proximity of the new trail segments; therefore, no environmental impacts are likely. Coordination with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources revealed that no Commonwealth-listed species are known to occur in the trail extension and augmentation areas. No environmental impacts to any Commonwealth-listed species are likely to occur, either.

Design of the new trail segments and related facilities will comply with all applicable environmental laws. Coordination under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed. Coordination under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Historic Preservation was not required because no undisturbed areas where there is any likelihood of the existence of artifacts or other features will be involved. No further archaeological work is necessary prior to trail and other facility construction.

In April 2003, a copy of the draft EA was furnished to the Blairsville Public Library and notification was given to the Blairsville Dispatch announcing that the copy was available for public review. No comments on the EA have been received from the public. This FONSI will be placed on the Pittsburgh District website for public viewing.

Three alternatives to the proposed features of the trail crossing Bow Ridge, use of the tunnel portals for picnic and foul weather shelters, and reopening of the Livermore Spur were considered. They were rejected for various reasons including advanced deterioration of the existing tunnel, greater cost and difficulty of construction, and less desirability of the trail experience for users. Also considered was the no action alternative which was rejected because it would prevent completion and greater enjoyment of the West Penn Trail, leaving the Conemaugh River Lake Section as an "orphan" trail.

Potential impacts of trail construction and operation were assessed with regard to water quality, wetlands, vegetation, terrestrial habitat, fish and wildlife, endangered and threatened species, flood plains, land use, soil erosion and sedimentation, recreation, soils and geology, scenic rivers and streams, aesthetics, socio-economic considerations, utilities, and cultural resources. As indicated in the EA, only minimal, temporary, or no impacts will result from the proposed action. Cumulative impacts will be minimal.

Based on an evaluation of the EA, it is my opinion that, for the reasons stated in that EA and above, provision of a lease for extension and augmentation of the Conemaugh River Lake Section of the West Penn Trail is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of

the human environment. The proposed action is one that would not normally require an Environmental Impact Statement.

Considering all beneficial and detrimental aspects relating to this work, I have reasonably determined that there will not be any significant adverse environmental impacts and that the public interest will be best served by the granting of a lease for the construction and operation of the proposed extension and augmentation of the Conemaugh River Lake Section of the West Penn Trail. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act is not warranted. The Environmental Assessment has been circulated for review to the concerned agencies. It has also been made available to the general public at the Blairsville Public Library and its availability has been advertised in the Blairsville Dispatch. This FONSI will be made available on the District website. My final decision on the proposed action to provide a lease to the CVC for extension and augmentation of the Conemaugh River Lake Section of the West Penn Trail will follow.

10 June 03

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Date

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Raymond K. Scrocco  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer